DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 677 CE 040 300

AUTHOR Check, John F.
TITLE Teaching-Learning Preferences of the Adult Learner.
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference (Louisville, KY,
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Adult Learning; *Adult Students; Andragogy; *Cognitive Style; College Students; *Course Content; *Course Organization; Higher Education; Learning Modalities; Nontraditional Students; Student Attitudes; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine theoretical models, learning styles, and activities adult learners prefer. From a total of 154 survey forms administered to undergraduate and graduate students in adult studies and in the adult learner course at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 119 questionnaires were analyzed, using a chi square model on all 20 items in the survey. Respondents showed a preference for an eclectic theoretical approach to teaching and learning. These same subjects strongly endorsed learning by insight, indicating that their favored mode of learning was through the lecture and discussion approach. Furthermore, these same subjects desired an outline of the lecture. Even though previous studies show that adults prefer a great deal of freedom in choice of course content, findings of this study did not support this. As expected, the adult learner does take notes during the lecture; this same learner was also assigned a term paper as a requirement of the course. As is true with the traditional student, the adult learner accepts the practice of testing; however, a large majority of the adults wanted a test that included both objective and subjective items. (Author/KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED251677

TEACHING-LEARNING PREFERENCES OF THE ADULT LEARNER

John F. Check
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference,
Louisville, Kentucky, November 1984

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Check

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 040 300

TEACHING-LEARNING PREFERENCES OF THE ADULT LEARNER

Until recently, adult education programs were designed to improve unique skills of individuals and to enhance employability for particular jobs or positions. Now that colleges are taking the initiative in providing liberal education opportunities for the improvement of one's personal self, theoretical models, teaching strategies, and curricular programs need to be scrutinized and restructured. More specifically, former theories and approaches that were employed with the traditional student may be inappropriate with the "new" clientele. This study was conducted to examine the theoretical bases that are currently used with the adult learner and to determine their efficacy. Are the practices that are utilized in the classroom with the adult learner consistent with empirical as well as experimental evidence?

A total of 154 survey forms were administered to both undergraduate and graduate students in the Adult Studies Program and to former students in the Adult Learner course at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. The analysis was run on 119 questionnaire forms. A chi square model was used on all 20 items in the survey, this for differences between sex, between undergraduate and graduate students, and between and among the three age groups (20-40, 41-60, 61+). The survey questions were designed to obtain answers to fundamental questions pertaining to teaching and learning with adults.

Findings

Almost 75% of the respondents to this survey indicated they preferred an eclectic theoretical approach to teaching and learning. More than half of the subjects in this study wanted their instructors to add meaning and to help the learner gain insight in the learning process. Many of the respondents indicated strong support for the cognitive theoretical framework of teaching and learning. Styles of teaching and delivery systems were very important to these subjects. Over 90% of them indicated a strong preference for instruction which combined the lecture and discussion as the desired mode of presentation by their instructors. Structure in a course was significant to the students in this study. Almost 80% of the respondents wanted a syllabus of the course, which included a delineation of units of study, major problems to be examined, and related readings in each unit of study. Over 60% of those responding emphasized a desire for an outline of each lecture presented. Contrary to much of the literature that reports a preference for a free-wheeling classroom environment, almost 50% of the subjects in this study wanted the instructor to determine course content. Most of the respondents felt that a mutual endeavor in planning the content would be the most amenable approach. The students in this study preferred to have the instructor schedule daily activities for class. Over 70% of the respondents insisted that a daily schedule be followed. Thorough lecture notes were taken by 71% of the respondents; the only significant difference was found with the 61+ age group who took only a few notes or none at all. Eighty-nine per cent of these subjects were assigned term papers, however, if given a choice, almost five times as many students in the 61+ age group showed a preference for a paper. Almost 75% of the students in this study were definitely in favor of tests which had a combination of objective and essay test items. However, four times as many males as females showed a preference for objective

tests instead of the essay type. Various hypotheses could be proferred to explain the disproportinate number of males selecting an objective test.

Some of the results obtained in this investigation were expected since they agreed with evidence obtained from traditional student populations. One would surmise, for instance, that the learner would prefer an instructor who injects meaning into the course content. On the other hand, the author of this study obtained findings that disagreed with some of the previous research and opinions expressed in several textbooks. This phenomenon is not unusual since the art of androgogy is relatively new. Many of the psychological principles that are currently employed with the adult learner have evolved from research and practice with grade and high school pupils or with the traditional college student. It is apparent that more study with the adult learner will need to be undertaken before more reliable conclusions can be made.

ABSTRACT

Teaching-Learning Preferences of the Adult Learner

JOHN F. CHECK

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

This study was conducted to determine theoretical models, learning styles, and activities adult learners prefer. From a total of 154 surveys administered to undergraduate and graduate students in Adult Studies and in the Adult Learner course at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 119 questionnaires were analyzed, using a chi square model on all 20 items in the survey.

Respondents showed a preference for an eclectic theoretical approach to teaching and learning. These same subjects strongly endorsed learning by insight, indicating that their favored mode of learning was through the lecture and discussion approach. Furthermore, these same subjects desired an outline of the lecture. Even though previous studies show that adults prefer a great deal of freedom in choice of course content, findings of this study did not support this. As expected, the adult learner does take notes during the lecture; this same learner was also assigned a term paper as a requirement of the course. As is true with the traditional student, the adult learner accepts the practice of testing, however, a large majority of the adults wanted a test that included both objective and subjective items.

Some of the results of this study agreed with previous findings, others differed.